



DESKTOP PUBLISHING SOFTWARE



A word processor can cope with the layout of a basic newsletter, but to design anything more sophisticated you'll need a dedicated DTP package. Sam Ellis looks at a range of options to help you produce professional-looking documents for the printed page or the web

There was a time when choosing desktop publishing (DTP) software was simple. Professional publishers could choose between the industry standard, QuarkXPress, or its less popular, cheaper rival, Adobe PageMaker. Quark held sway more because of the lack of competition and its dominance within the print houses than its innate superiority. For amateurs, there was little to choose from and most made do with the tools available in word-processing packages.

But the DTP market has changed immeasurably, both in terms of the products on offer and what they can do. Quark's dominance has been shattered by Adobe's InDesign, a slightly cheaper product that integrates better with its Photoshop and Illustrator graphics software. The lower end of the market also offers more choice.

Since our last round-up of DTP software (*Shopper*, January 2004), there have been some casualties in the market. Adobe discontinued PageMaker in 2003, in a bid to move all its customers over to InDesign. Corel has also pulled out of the market and is no longer promoting its Ventura package. Instead it suggests that designers use CorelDraw Graphics Suite 12, which we have reviewed here.

WHY USE DTP SOFTWARE?

Although it is possible to put together a simple document using a word processor, if you want to create long or complex documents such as books, brochures or magazines, the special features in DTP software are invaluable. They can make the whole process of putting images and words together much simpler, allowing you to make a layout look professional by flowing text around pictures, automatically creating indexes and numbering pages. They handle the combination of complex tables and text better, and also integrate with other imaging software to allow you to import pictures or illustrations automatically.

DTP packages allow you to preview and proof pages before you print them. You can associate different fonts and font sizes with saved styles to create a consistent look. They speed up and simplify the process of creating professional-looking documents, whether it's a glossy brochure for your potential clients or a technical manual for aircraft engineers.

Although DTP software was originally developed with print publishing in mind, many programs now allow you to export documents to a whole range of mediums, including Portable Document Format (PDF) and web pages. When choosing the right product for your needs this is an important consideration.

THE END RESULT

If you're outputting your document to a print bureau, there are several issues you'll need to take into account. First, you'll need to consider the type of colour you plan to use: spot or process. Spot

colour is the simpler and cheaper option and will be fine for simple text and graphics documents, as you're restricted to one, two or three single colours of ink. Process colour is where colours are blended to create a wide range of shades and will be necessary if you're printing colour photographs, for example. Process colour will cost more if you're printing your document at a print bureau, but it will produce more flexible documents.

Another factor to bear in mind is image resolution. If you're used to viewing images onscreen or using them on the internet, you may not realise that you'll need a much higher-resolution image – with a minimum of 300dpi – in order to create a sharp print.

If you're using a professional printer or bureau, you'll have to make sure that they can read files created in the software you are using. Most can read Quark and Adobe files, but if you're using less well-known software, you'll need to check if the files are acceptable or if you can send PDFs.

IN THIS REVIEW

CorelDraw Graphics Suite 12
FrameMaker 7.1
InDesign CS 2
Office Publisher 2003
PagePlus 10
Publisher 4 Gold
Publisher 4 Home
QuarkXPress 6.5

FIVE KEY FACTORS TO BEAR IN MIND WHEN CHOOSING DTP SOFTWARE

- 1 If you want to publish to the web or PDF, check the software can do this easily.
- 2 Does the software integrate well with the other design tools you use, such as Photoshop or Illustrator, and will it work with your operating system? High-end products often require the latest versions of Windows.
- 3 Can your printer handle the files that are created using the software? Some home

products use file formats that cannot be read by other packages.

- 4 If you have specialist requirements such as tables, multiple languages, images or mathematical equations, check that the software supports those features.

- 5 Choose a product that suits your level of expertise. High-end software will overwhelm novices.



REVIEW PROFESSIONAL DTP SOFTWARE

ADOBE
InDesign CS 2

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £716 inc VAT

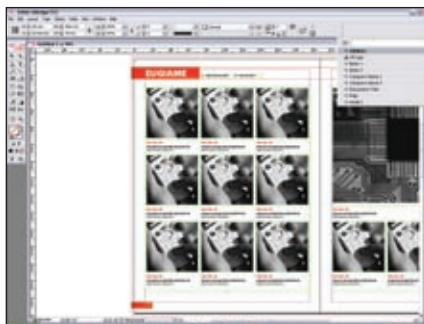
SUPPLIER Adobe 020 7365 0733

DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk

InDesign was introduced as Adobe's answer to QuarkXPress and since its launch in 1999 it has made huge inroads into Quark's market. It's cheaper than Quark and offers better integration with Adobe's other industry-standard design tools, Photoshop and Illustrator. Thanks in part to this it has won over many of Quark's traditional publishing customers, including *Computer Shopper*.

Adobe has recently moved towards a new method of selling its software, encouraging customers to buy the Creative Suite (CS) bundle of products. This includes InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator and is cheaper than buying the programs separately. You can still buy InDesign on its own, but it works out only slightly cheaper than buying the whole suite, which costs £828 including VAT.

The latest version of the software, InDesign CS 2, adds many new features to the software. One of the most notable additions is Adobe Bridge, an asset management tool that allows you to locate, browse and organise layout elements such as Photoshop images or Illustrator graphics. The new snippets feature allows you to export elements such as tables or chunks of text from within a page

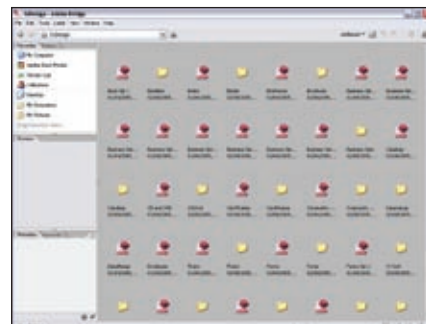


Applying styles throughout a document is simple using the Quick Apply feature

as individual files to be used again later. To create a snippet file you simply drag the element you want to copy to the Bridge.

There is also an emphasis on speeding up repetitive tasks. The Object Styles feature, for example, allows you to save a wide range of style settings, such as text and paragraph styles, corner effects and transparency. This enables you to apply all those styles at the click of a button. For example, if your text columns always have the same settings such as drop shadows and text wraps, you can save this combination as an Object Style and automatically apply it to each column.

The Quick Apply feature allows you to apply styles to paragraphs, objects or characters by using a simple keyboard command. Simply type the first few letters of the name of the style you want to use and InDesign will find it for you. This allows you to add styles such as drop shadows consistently and quickly.



Adobe Bridge is a great new feature that allows you to manage your layout elements easily

Another new feature is PDF and Photoshop layer support. This means you can save and review a range of design choices within a single document, so you can see if your image would look better before or after your tweaks. Other new features include spelling dictionaries for 28 languages and a myriad of other changes that make a designer's life easier. High-resolution images are automatically scaled to a reasonable size on import, for example, and footnote formatting is automatic.

InDesign CS deserved its Best Buy award in our last DTP round-up, and its successor is even better.

✓ Excellent new productivity features, such as Adobe Bridge, snippets and Object Styles

✗ Expensive as a standalone product; suitable only for professional designers

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 190MB disk space

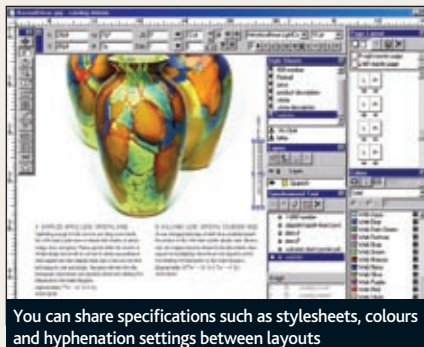
REVIEW PROFESSIONAL DTP SOFTWARE

QUARK
QuarkXPress 6.5

RATING ★★★

PRICE £798 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Quark 00800 1787 8275

DETAILS www.quark.co.uk

You can share specifications such as stylesheets, colours and hyphenation settings between layouts

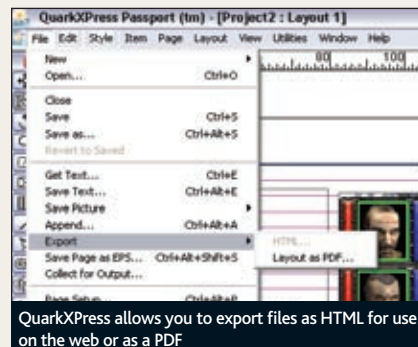
The latest release of QuarkXPress is a free upgrade from version 6 and it addresses some of the shortcomings of the previous edition. The next major upgrade to version 7 was slated for this year, but it is not yet available. New features due to be unveiled with the launch of QuarkXPress 7 include emphasis on digital workflows, collaboration tools and design-led features.

QuarkXPress 6.5 has plenty to offer in the meantime, though. You can import Photoshop files and work with layers in a similar fashion to InDesign, but there are some differences between how layers work in the two packages. Quark can't handle Layer Comps – a new feature in InDesign CS 2 – Photoshop Filter Adjustment or Layer Effects, nor can it manipulate layers in PDF files. But it can differentiate between a text layer, an adjustment layer and a regular layer, and only Quark allows you to manipulate layer opacity and blend mode, hide or show individual channels and remap spot channel colour to another colour.

Before you get started, though, you will have to overcome the irritatingly complicated

installation process. The software comes on two discs: the first contains QuarkXPress 6 and the second has the 6.5 upgrade. Installation requires quite a bit of swapping between the two and provoked a few error messages, although the software worked smoothly once installed. The download procedure isn't much simpler, as you need to download the correct upgrade for your setup depending on which version you're upgrading.

Version 6.5 adds several other new features that make upgrading well worth the trouble. These include improved table handling, which allows you to group tables with other QuarkXPress items. This isn't as impressive as InDesign's fully integrated flowing tables, but it's useful if you need to resize items or alter table features. Guide handling has also been enhanced, and you can now place guides on a master page's pasteboard and display them automatically in your layout.



QuarkXPress allows you to export files as HTML for use on the web or as a PDF

If you open a layout created on another system, version 6.5 automatically allows you to buy and download any missing fonts. It also helps the output process by allowing you to customise printing features. For instance, you can save output settings for custom bleeds as print styles.

QuarkXPress 6.5 ensures that this software isn't blown completely out of the running by InDesign, and it will appeal to those familiar with the Quark interface. However, it's hard to see a bright future for this once-dominant DTP package.

✓ Ability to import Photoshop files and work with layers; improved table and guide handling

✗ Poor installation routine; less sophisticated integration options than InDesign

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 190MB disk space



REVIEW DTP SOFTWARE

MICROSOFT Office Publisher 2003

RATING ★★☆☆

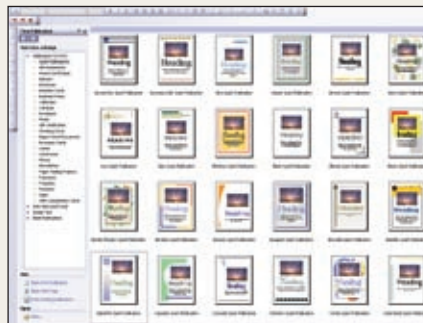
PRICE £143 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.ukDETAILS www.microsoft.com/uk

Microsoft's Publisher has been around since 1991 and has introduced many non-professionals to DTP software. Its price makes it affordable to home and small business users, and its range of functions makes it suitable for the workplace, where it can be used to create professional marketing materials, and at home for more frivolous purposes such as designing greetings cards or invitations.

Office Publisher 2003 is sold either as a standalone product or as part of the Office 2003 suite, and it integrates closely with the bundle's other components. A familiar Office look and feel makes it easy for novice users to get to grips with. It also uses similar features, such as task panes. The Publication task pane, for example, allows you to start your document by publication type – for print, email or the internet – by a specific design set or from a blank publication. This wizard-style approach is useful if you have never created your own publications before.

If you're working on a publication for commercial printing, Office Publisher 2003 includes support for separations, composite

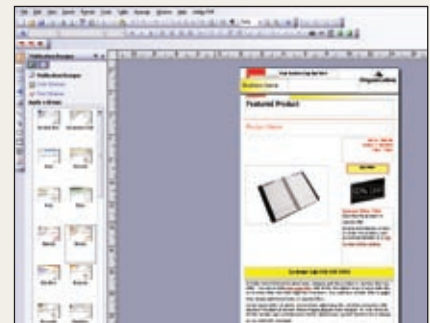


A range of templates make creating impressive print documents easy, even for non-designers

process colour, PostScript printing and an improved Graphics manager. Office Publisher isn't just about outputting to print, though, as it also enables the creation of email marketing messages using the new email wizard. The latest version of the program allows recipients to view these messages in a number of email clients, including Outlook 2003, Outlook Express, Hotmail, Yahoo! and AOL. You can also use Office Publisher to create web pages, although for anything sophisticated you will have to use a dedicated web design tool.

To make it easier to create a compelling design, Office Publisher comes with a range of good-quality templates, which you can customise by adding your own colour schemes or fonts. You can also download new templates if those that come with the software don't appeal.

Office Publisher is ideally suited to the type of publishing tasks required by most offices, such



You can create marketing messages that can be read by a wide range of email clients

as creating brochures, leaflets, CD and DVD labels and newsletters. It can't cope with longer documents, however, and there is no support for features such as tables of contents, indexes or cross references.

Office Publisher is a decent tool if you are familiar with the Office interface and you want a DTP package that is easy to master. However, it is quite expensive and has limited appeal to home users or those who want to create more sophisticated documents.

✓ Familiar Office-style interface; good for short documents

✗ Expensive; lacks features essential for larger documents

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000 SP3/XP, 233MHz Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 250MB disk space, internet connection

REVIEW DTP SOFTWARE

SERIF PagePlus 10

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £100 inc VAT; £50 upgrade from

any Serif product

SUPPLIER Serif 08003 767070

DETAILS www.serif.com

Serif's low-cost PagePlus 10 DTP package comes with plenty of extras that will appeal to novices. Key functions are all wizard-based, so you are guided through the whole process of creating a document. There are also tutorials if you would prefer to work on your own, although these are not interactive. You simply display a document onscreen and follow the instructions, which can be quite tricky as the tutorial window obscures the PagePlus window.

To help make the software as accessible as possible, the interface is clean and simple. The latest version has made it easier to use tools such as the spellchecker, which floats onscreen at all times, while an AutoFlow button allows you to flow dummy text into documents to preview how they will look.

If you work with foreign language text you will welcome the addition of Unicode support. You can import, export and paste Unicode text, the standard designed to provide a universal way of encoding characters of any language regardless of the



The Spell Check feature now floats on the screen while you work so it's always close at hand

computer system being used. You can also use foreign languages, special fonts and symbols.

PagePlus 10 has excellent mail merging capabilities, and you can assign anything as a data source from which information can be merged into a document. You can even make a folder of images a data source, and merge them with a document to create an image-based publication. Output to the web and PDF has also been improved. You can now add different backgrounds to separate web pages and embed hyperlinks directly within PDFs.

Version 10 also adds new features that will appeal to budding authors. The BookPlus feature allows you to merge several PagePlus publications into one, treating each document as a separate chapter. You can add and delete these chapters at will, and the software will automatically renumber the pages for you. You can also create contents and



The Picture Toolbar allows you to perform simple image editing from within PagePlus 10

index pages for your book to give it a professional finish, as well as apply different styles across the whole document to provide a coherent appearance.

While all these new features are welcome, the real attraction of PagePlus 10 is that it allows anyone to create a publication with very little effort and at a reasonable price. It won't turn a beginner into a layout artist, but after a bit of time with the manual and tutorials your publications will look a whole lot more professional.

✓ Reasonable price; useful user guides; extensive wizard-driven tools

✗ Still takes some time to master; non-interactive tutorials

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 or above, Pentium processor, 256MB RAM, 300MB disk space



REVIEW DTP SOFTWARE

GREENSTREET
Publisher 4 HomeRATING ★★ ★★
PRICE £30 inc VAT

Publisher 4 Gold

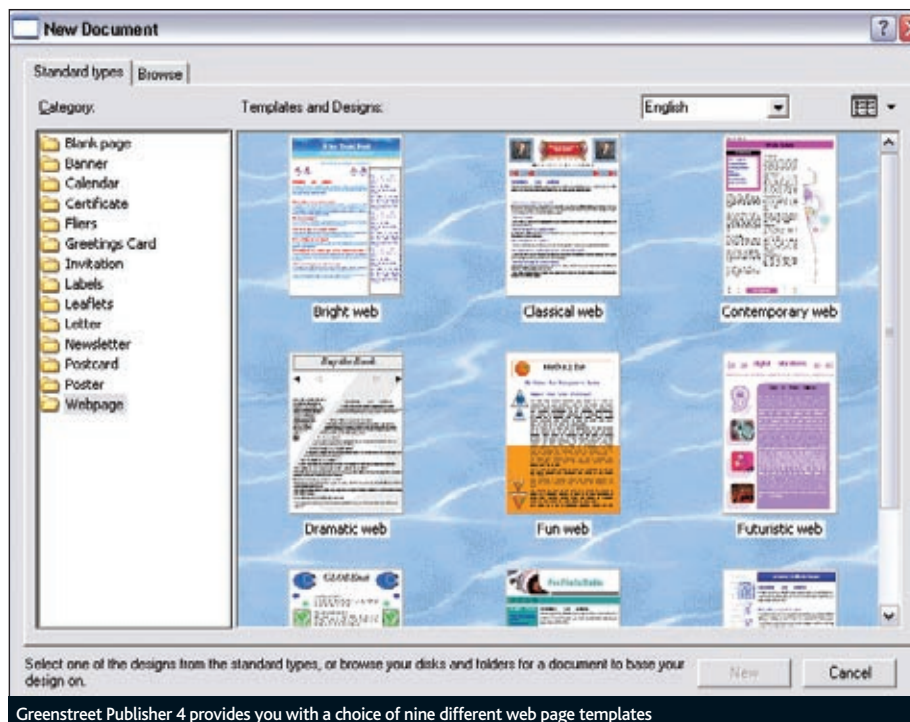
RATING ★★ ★★
PRICE £50 inc VATSUPPLIER Greenstreet 01480 496789
DETAILS www.greenstreetsoftware.com

While Adobe and Quark charge hundreds of pounds for their DTP packages, Greenstreet's Publisher 4 is at the other end of the scale. The name may not be as familiar as the professional packages, but it's actually quite a big player at the low end of the DTP market, and many less expensive products are simply rebadged variations of its Publisher software.

As you would expect at these prices, both the Home and Gold editions are pretty basic, but that's no bad thing for inexperienced users who would probably be confused by complicated features. Both versions start with a wizard-style window asking which task you want to carry out. You can start a new document using one of the supplied templates, create a blank document, start a tutorial or use the Quickstart option. There are five tutorials to choose from, although the emphasis is on work-related documents, even in the Home edition. They cover tasks such as designing flyers, newsletters and memos and, although they aren't that inspiring, they cover all the program's main functions.

Publisher provides a good introduction to DTP methods as it helps you understand how to build up a layout by placing different elements within boxes or frames. Many home users might have used a basic version of this method in Word, but Publisher takes it to the next level. Each element of your layout is placed in an appropriate box and you can then work on it individually, by resizing text or changing the font, for example. You then move the boxes around to create the final design.

If you stick to the templates, much of the basic layout will already have been done for you, but the designs may not be to your taste and can look a bit cheap. However, you can download more templates from the Greenstreet website if those provided don't meet your needs. The templates are installed with the software. This is an improvement over previous versions of the program, which required you to insert another disc to access them. This



comes at the expense of hard disk space, though: the software requires 190MB of installation space.

Creating layouts from scratch using your own text and images is more challenging, but given some time and a little effort, will create more appealing and professional results. Plenty of pictures and fonts come with the software, although as with most clip art and stock images you may not like what you see.

Publisher doesn't offer the same integration with Microsoft Office or image-editing software as its more expensive rivals, but if you simply want to produce designs for in-house or home use, this won't be such a problem. However, if you want to send files to a professional printer you'll have to check that the bureau will be able to read your files. Publisher assumes that you will be outputting only to a personal printer, although it can generate spot and process colour separations.

Both versions of the software can export any page in HTML and you can create a specific web page design. There are nine styles to choose from, which you can customise to meet your needs.

You may be wondering what the Gold edition adds to the mix to justify its higher price. The answer is a host of extra work-related features. These include 2D and 3D charts, spreadsheets, a mailmerge facility, contact organiser, barcode

generation – which can produce 23 standard barcodes – and 18 language dictionaries.

Both versions are currently bundled with a free version of PublishPDF, a conversion utility that allows you to create PDF files from any word processor, spreadsheet or DTP application.

While Greenstreet's products are too basic to appeal to serious designers, they have their strengths. The most notable of these is the low price; if you need to produce only the occasional design or memo or you want a way to make personalised cards or invitations for a special event, this is a cheap and relatively simple way to do it. For smaller businesses that need occasional designs such as basic mailouts or newsletters, this is the most cost-effective solution. However, Publisher 4 isn't really suitable for those who need to create specialised or complex layouts as it lacks any high-end tools, and it could cause problems when outputting to a professional printer.

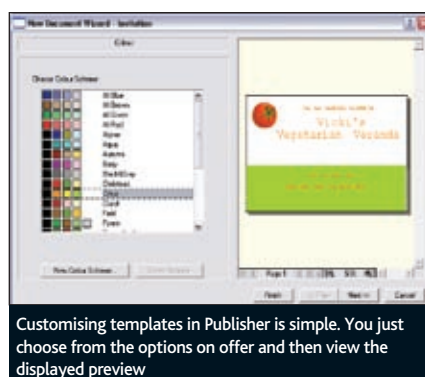
✓ Cheap; simple interface; plenty of features for business users

✗ No support for specialised documents; templates look cheap

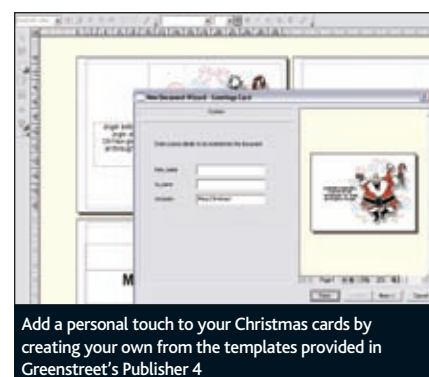
REQUIREMENTS Windows 95 or above, 166MHz Pentium processor, 16MB RAM, 190MB disk space



Each Publisher program begins with the same wizard-style interface, which guides you through creating the document you need



Customising templates in Publisher is simple. You just choose from the options on offer and then view the displayed preview



Add a personal touch to your Christmas cards by creating your own from the templates provided in Greenstreet's Publisher 4



REVIEW DOCUMENT LAYOUT SOFTWARE

ADOBE FrameMaker 7.1

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £828 inc VAT

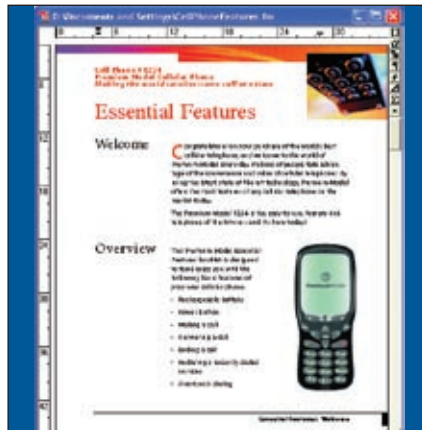
SUPPLIER Adobe 020 7365 0733

DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk

FrameMaker has a very specific target market; it is not for the novice, or even for those who design standard documents such as ads, magazines or short books. It serves a single purpose: creating long, complex, technical documents. It's not glamorous or exciting, but it does the job incredibly well.

As you'd expect from a product designed with technical documents in mind, there's not much in the way of snazzy text layout options. Text boxes come in just two shapes: square or rectangular. Its handling of clipping paths, the path or shape used to cut out an image, is equally disappointing. But while it lacks the trimmings you would expect from a standard DTP package, it is rich in features designed to make creating complex documents as simple as possible. Its support for features such as mathematical equations, tables, indexes, tables of contents and cross references is unparalleled.

FrameMaker has built-in HTML export and XML support, which is ideal for those who want to share documents online. The latest version adds new XML features, including support for conditional text in XML documents. This means you can include text that can be hidden or shown based on preset conditions, so you can create an XML manual, for

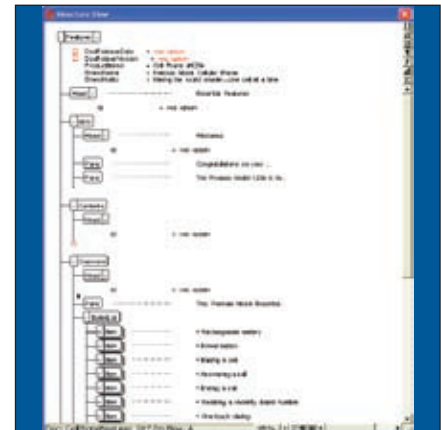


Though FrameMaker is designed for long, technical documents, you can still include rich media content

example, where certain paragraphs are changed depending on the intended audience. Version 7.1 can also create cross references between multiple XML files and there is a new Save as XML option when editing XML documents.

The latest version also includes new QuarkXPress and PageMaker import filters. As with most imports you will have to do some tweaking, but if you're thinking of swapping over from either of those packages the new filters will make your life a lot easier. There is also support for direct placement of Photoshop and JPEG2000 images.

The non-Windows style interface may be offputting to some and is even less acceptable considering Adobe's decision not to ship version 7.1 on the Mac platform. That said, many FrameMaker users will be accustomed to Adobe's products due to its longstanding dominance in the world of page design with Photoshop and Illustrator.



The structured authoring environment makes creating valid XML simple

In use, FrameMaker 7.1 is both fast and stable, something that isn't always the case with such complex applications. It is the ideal tool for those who need to create and share long documents. The improved XML support will be welcomed by those who want the flexibility of sharing documents both in print and online, and the new conditional text features will prove useful. But it is a professional and complex product, and suitable only for those who have the expertise to handle it and the need for its specialised features.

✓ Excellent tools for creating long documents; improved XML support

✗ Expensive

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 SE or above, Pentium processor, 256MB RAM, 275MB disk space

REVIEW GRAPHICS SUITE

COREL CorelDraw Graphics Suite 12

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £422 inc VAT

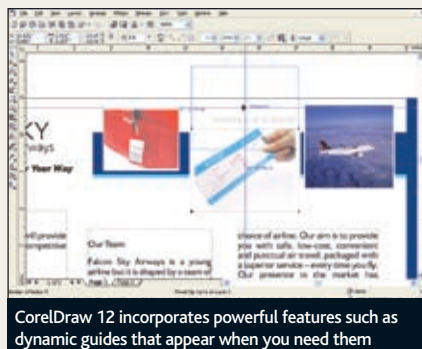
SUPPLIER Corel 08003 769271

DETAILS www.corel.co.uk

This isn't strictly a DTP package, but Corel is encouraging its customers to use Graphics Suite for that purpose, so we decided to see if it is a viable option. The Suite consists of CorelDraw, which handles illustration and page layout, Corel Photo-Paint for digital imaging and Corel Rave for 3D animation creation. The fact that you get all three products makes the price a little more reasonable, but at over £400 it still falls into the professional category.

The package is aimed at designers and small-to-medium business users. The wealth of onscreen help and tutorials put its powerful tools within the reach of non-professional users, helping them to master the software faster than is possible with other high-end products.

Despite not being a dedicated DTP package, there are plenty of touches that aid the process of creating and outputting a publication. CorelDraw imports text from Word or WordPerfect, retaining

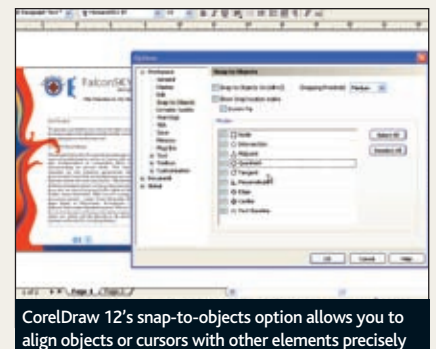


CorelDraw 12 incorporates powerful features such as dynamic guides that appear when you need them

all formatting, which is no mean feat for a graphics program. When you import a document you can choose to optimise it for a presentation, viewing on the desktop or commercial printing. It also supports Unicode and includes over 60,000 characters for all written languages. It can also handle relatively long documents of up to 99 pages.

As well as the ability to import text from Word and WordPerfect, CorelDraw supports importing and exporting of a wide range of different formats, although one notable omission is the RAW format. We have touched on the issue of providing fonts to printers, and the TrueDoc font-embedding feature allows you to embed a copy of all the fonts you have used within the CDR source file, so you don't have to supply them to the print shop.

Other parts of the suite are equally impressive and the intuitive interface makes the manipulation



CorelDraw 12's snap-to-objects option allows you to align objects or cursors with other elements precisely

of images and the creation of animated 3D graphics just as accessible.

CorelDraw is a great choice for non-designers who want to create a publication that's a cut above the basic output of budget DTP packages. That it provides the range of functionality you might expect from a combination of several other products makes it good value, but if you need high-end DTP features you should choose one of the more dedicated tools. **CS**

✓ Ability to import Photoshop files and work with layers; improved table and guide handling

✗ Poor installation routine; less sophisticated integration options than InDesign

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 190MB disk space